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The digitally-enabled gig economy is characterized by a precarious and flexible lifestyle in which online freelancers must continuously secure gigs in order to ensure a livable income. Consequently, their self-presentation is crucial as they must differentiate themselves from competitors. By analyzing 39 interviews from digital workers on the freelancing platform Upwork, we identified five key self-branding strategies: boosting a profile via algorithmic manipulation, showcasing skills, expanding presence, maintaining relationships with clients, and individualizing brand. These strategies were analyzed using Goffman's dramaturgical theory. Lastly, we conclude that the primary goal of personal branding directly challenged the very nature of precarity and anonymity that comes with being a digital worker, as the majority of participants chose to self-brand themselves in order to be recognized — and perhaps even appreciated by — clients.

Headings:

Self-Branding

Digital Work

Online Labor Platforms

Gig Economy

Impression Management

SELF-BRANDING PRACTICES OF DIGITAL WORKERS IN A RESURGING GIG ECONOMY

by
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1. Introduction

A new type of work characterized by an unprecedented reliance on technology is emerging in part due to advancements in digital platforms and a resurging gig economy. Although technology's integration into the workplace has always played a major factor in how efficient and effective work processes are, we are seeing an even bigger shift in the 21st century for knowledge workers: technology is now becoming the *milieu* for their work. In other words, knowledge work, defined as labor where the main capital is formalized and applied skilled knowledge (Drucker, 1993), is increasingly moving toward more dependency on digital tools and infrastructures — namely online platforms, algorithms, and data (Orlikowski & Scott, 2016). This phenomenon, known as "digital work," is a topic of interest in several research communities, including but not limited to economics, marketing, organization science, information systems, and sociology.

By making use of the various technologies mentioned above, digital workers are afforded several distinct characteristics which give them the possibility of untethering themselves from the traditional "nine-to-five" white collar lifestyle; perhaps most notable is the trait of mobility since their work is location-independent (Ens et al., 2018). This freedom of not being constrained to an office environment greatly attracts people to digital work and has simultaneously helped grow an economy in which people are choosing to become their own bosses, free of office politics and bureaucratic setbacks (Nash et. al, 2018). Self-presenting oneself then becomes a crucial skill for digital workers who are competing against thousands of others with similar skill sets as they

seek to differentiate — and essentially sell — themselves to future employers. Their brand and reputation is often deemed essential to the success of their business, which for many acts as their primary source of income.

However, due to not having a long-standing traditional employee-employer relationship, digital work, often manifesting in the form of gig and freelancing work, can be inherently precarious in nature and presents new challenges for these workers such as continuously finding new clients in order to ensure a steady income and creating a versatile image online. As such, a key element of digital work has to do with the capacities of independent workers in developing a viable online brand (Gandini, 2015). A common trend for self-branding is using online methods to secure jobs as opposed to more traditional networking strategies, such as word-of-mouth marketing, CV circulation, and classified advertising.

While some professional platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn are known for their superior social networking abilities, specialized labor or gig platforms like Upwork and Fiverr are designed to enable independent digital work using algorithms and also include additional affordances like rating and review features which further contribute to an individual's online persona (Mrass et al, 2018). These digital labor platforms are becoming especially accepted and adopted throughout the freelancing community as they facilitate communication between the worker and client while providing both parties with mutually beneficial information — the worker is able to create and personalize an outward-facing public user profile page (i.e. they can self-brand themselves) and the client is able to browse and filter through different people before choosing to hire.

Self-branding (used synonymously with the term personal branding for the purpose of this paper) in itself is not a novel concept as it has been widely investigated in the fields of sociology and psychology, as well as the fields of marketing and business since the emergence of the Internet and more recently social media. There remains, however, a gap in research carried out in the context of digital work and the gig economy. Particularly, while the topic of personal branding is of high interest in the industry, there still remains relatively few studies in academia which revolve around how contractors and independent workers effectively choose to self-present themselves for clients. Additionally, past studies involving self-branding have tended to focus only on the workers; however, it is worth studying how the target audience (in our case, clients on Upwork) perceives these self-presentational strategies.

The overarching purpose and objective of this paper is to explore the idea of self-presentation as an integrated characteristic of digital work and to pursue three specific research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of self-presentation commonly held by digital workers on digital labor platforms?
2. What considerations do digital workers take when choosing to brand themselves?
3. What affordances and constraints do online platforms hold for digital workers in the context of self-branding?

This master's thesis approaches this gap by focusing on the common affordances and constraints of digital labor platforms, and by applying Erving Goffman's sociological framework of dramaturgical analysis and impression management theory to our findings (a framework which likens the concept of self-presentation to a theatrical presentation).

The research study addresses the questions listed above by providing a qualitative analysis of 39 semi-structured interviews of online freelancers and clients registered on the website Upwork, the largest online freelancing platforms used by millions. More specifically, as of 2016, the platform hosts more than 9.3 million freelancers and 3.7 million employers (Popiel, 2017).

From our analysis, we found that Upwork emphasized its online social reputation system for its freelancers who were usually judged by clients through their user profile page. More specifically, we learned about the different reputation metrics the platform incorporates (e.g. job success score, ratings) and how Upwork users respond — and act — accordingly. We conclude the paper by describing five specific self-branding strategies digital workers used, which were then described and categorized using Goffman's dramaturgical analysis rhetoric of self-presentation. The five self-branding strategies we observed were: boosting a profile via algorithmic manipulation, showcasing skills, expanding online and offline presence, maintaining relationships, and individualizing brand. By incorporating a sociological lens, this paper seeks to understand the interdisciplinary concept of self-presentation in a digital age.

2. Literature Review

The research topic lies at the intersection of two topical areas, digital work and self-branding, which this literature review addresses below. The first section of the literature review focuses on the concepts of digital work and digital labor platforms within the context of the gig economy; and the second section discusses the importance of self-branding within the context of independent worker environments. This literature review subsequently concludes by providing an overview of current research regarding self-branding for digital workers in the gig economy.

2.1. Digital Work

2.1.1. A Resurging Gig Economy

The gig economy, also known as the "sharing economy," "freelance economy," "platform economy," and "crowdworking" amongst other terms, refers to work characterized by short-term engagements, self-employment, and contract work (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016; Lewchuk, 2017). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) states that there is no official definition of a gig economy, but that a gig is typically defined as "a single project or task for which a worker is hired, often through a digital marketplace, to work on demand" (Torpey & Hogan, 2016). The same article published by the BLS also lists several pros and cons of taking on this non-traditional work; with advantages including flexibility, variety, and passion, and disadvantages being inconsistency, scheduling, and a lack of benefits.

Despite this economic model being around for some time now, digital technology is now playing an active role in how people find work by mediating gigs, though economist Jim Stanford maintains alongside other skeptics that gig work should be thought of as "resurgent" rather than new (Collins et al., 2019, Stanford, 2017). Stanford furthermore implies that the rising trend of precarious work might be a result of "the evolution of broad social relationships and power balances, as much as technological innovation in its own right" and that online gig platforms should be thought of as "simply facilitating the application of long-standing management labour extraction strategies that are as old as capitalism" (Stanford, 2017).

In his essay, Stanford explores this concept by listing five features of digitally-enabled gig work (an evolution of gig work we previously knew): (a) work is performed on an on-demand basis; (b) workers are compensated for their task and/or product, not their time; (c) workers supply their own resources, including their physical working environment; (d) there is a third actor in the work process different than client or worker which organizes the work; and (e) there is digital intermediation in the process. According to this definition, digital work is inherently part of the gig economy ecosystem given that there is a digital intermediary (e.g. online labor platform) which organizes the work between the freelancer and client. By analyzing this resurgent economy in conjunction with online platforms, we are able to conceptualize the large-scale effects it has for the future of work practices.

Needless to say, there has been a dramatic increase in independent, self-employed, contract, and short-term work for the past decade. According to Ellen Harpel, founder and president of an economic development and marketing intelligence firm, an

estimated 30 to 40% of workers in the United States currently or have previously freelanced or worked independently in their lifetime as either a primary or secondary job, and that approximately 10% have worked independently as part of temporary or contract work. She also notes that an estimated one percent of workers are engaged in “online platform work” (e.g. Uber, Airbnb), insinuating that the workers in this category primarily engage with this digital work as a “supplemental income to other sources” (Harpel, 2019). Nevertheless, Harpel’s research highlights the importance and prevalence of independent gig work in an evolving economy and concludes that the type of gig work ranges by industry and skill-level.

In fact, according to a study commissioned by Upwork and the Freelancers Union, 57 million Americans (i.e. 35% Americans) freelanced in 2019 and 53% of Gen Z (ages 18-22) have freelanced in 2019, which suggests that we will only continue to see a rise in the upcoming years. The majority of work includes creative work (e.g. design, arts, entertainment) and roughly half of gig work is skilled, knowledge work. Additionally, this groundbreaking study shows that the majority of these workers do not self-describe themselves as "gig workers"; instead, they prefer to identify as "independent workers" and "self-employed,” which could potentially point to why there remains a gap in literature concerning the subject (“Freelancing in America,” 2019).

Contrarily, while evident that digital technology is helping facilitate work practices in today’s society, there are still critics who doubt the usefulness or effectiveness of gig work. Some reasons for their criticisms include poor working conditions, lack of control, anxiety, and insecurity — all of which are characteristics of digital work which are often understated in research (MacDonald & Giazitzoglu, 2019).

Furthermore, not everyone participating in the gig economy does so by choice, as 40% take on this precarious and temporary work out of necessity ("Freelancing in America," 2019; Harpel, 2019). Critics, like Stephen Barley, argue that that there is a lack of research being conducted on the changing nature of work in organizational studies. On one hand, while he acknowledges the decrease in manufacturing jobs and increase in contingent, or task-specific work, Barley also warns that gig work is not always the most cost-effective option for a company, reinforcing the value and need for continuous research in the field (Barley et al., 2017).

2.1.2. Digitally-Enabled Knowledge Work

The new emphasis on work which is mediated through technology and online platforms calls for a new category of work: a phenomenon researchers are now calling "digital work." Research regarding digital work is relatively new and is of high interest in both academia and industry and in both cases, there is an understanding that the work economy is adapting with technological advancements.

While there is no unanimous agreement on how this is exactly defined, Table 1 shows a synthesis of several attempts at describing what constitutes "digital work":

Reference	Definition
Orlikowski, 2016	"Work practices that are being reconfigured through the operation of digital platforms, algorithms, and the processing of multiple, diverse kinds of data"
Durward, Blohm, & Leimeister, 2016	"An effort to create digital goods or that makes substantial use of digital tools"
Wang et al., 2018	"Work in which digital technology has transformed factors of production"
Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013	"The organisation of human experiences with the help of the human brain, digital media and speech in such a way that new products are created"
Nash et al., 2018	"[Work] that [creates] digital goods using digital tools"

Table 1: Descriptions of Digital Work in the Previous Literature

All of the definitions above use an economic discourse (i.e. "factors of production" and "goods") and explain how the work process and its product(s) are being transformed by technology. More specifically, characteristics of digital work include location-independent work practices, digital platforms, and Internet dependencies (Nash et al., 2018).

A related topic to digital work is considered knowledge work (and vice versa), where someone's main asset and capital is their skilled knowledge. The knowledge economy — and therefore advanced research in economics — rose after the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism and was studied closely by German theorist Karl Marx, who attempted to breakdown the meaning of work. In order to do so, Marx conceptualized the idea of "labor-power," a term which is used to contrast physical, human labor with an abstraction of work which could then be exchanged for monetary

purposes" (Marx et al., 1990). By doing so, he consequently laid a foundation for analyzing current-day economics and the study of work. Marx furthermore stressed a worker's skill and training as being especially valuable in this labor-power exchange, indirectly alluding to what we now refer to as knowledge work (Schatzkin, 1978).

Knowledge work describes any type of work where there is an emphasis on higher-level thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, typically obtained through formalized training. As a result of knowledge work reaching nearly every industry and access to digital technology is starting to become more accessible, digital work is becoming a disruptive force in the working economy. Several examples of knowledge workers in today's society include: creative writers, computer programmers, accountants, educators, physicians, architects, and interior designers.

One way to explore characteristics of digital work is through sociologist Anselm Strauss' theoretical perspective of work. By studying work as a process, Strauss was able to identify and articulate several key attributes of what working entails. Widely known for his grounded theory in qualitative research, Strauss conducted a plethora of studies in the 1980's and 1990's in an attempt to comprehend organizational practices during a time where digital technologies were transforming the way people perform routine tasks in businesses and organizations, such as automated invoices and payroll (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017). Strauss' findings, which date decades prior to the Internet era, remain undoubtedly pertinent for today's society and can be used to exemplify the new phenomenon of digital work.

One of his major findings was an articulation of actors, a commonly referenced term in the realm of sociology and technology studies (STS) which has several different

connotations depending on the applied theoretical lens. By his definition, actors are of units of any size (i.e. a person, team, organizational unit) which have accountability and freedom to work either collaboratively or independently in order to achieve a goal (Strauss, 1985). In the context of digital work, the primary actors involved are referred to as "digital workers," "clients," and "online platforms" (Mrass et al., 2017). For the purpose of this paper, the terms "digital workers" and "online freelancers" are used interchangeably.

Strauss, along with his colleague Juliet Corbin, promoted the idea of actors ever further, arguing that actors have stance when it comes to work, or a "position taken by each participant toward both the work and the working-out process" (Corbin & Strauss, 1993). This emphasis should be highlighted as it gives actors some type of social agency when it comes to working, contradicting Marx's technological deterministic viewpoint that technology has agency in society as opposed to humans (Matthewman, 2011). These findings align with recent research which suggests that digital nomads — a large subset of digital workers — are part of a "lifehacking subculture" characterized by "an affinity for autonomy, proactivity, and [self-actualization] fulfilled through technical competence," thus giving a degree of independence and agency to the actor (Nash et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018). An article written in 2018 also reaffirms this by narrowing down three specific traits for "decent digital work," which is an adaption of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal #8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. The traits identified in the study were: autonomy, belonging, and competence (Ens et al., 2018).

A third concept of work Strauss elaborated on along with colleague Susan Leigh Star is the visibility of work, providing a framework for analyzing both the workers and the work product itself. The fact that work may be "invisible" provides two important considerations for this paper: first, it provides a framework for focusing on both the actors and their work (i.e. digital goods); and second, it brings frame of reference to the forefront, accepting that the definition of work is instinctively relative and changes depending on who is defining it (Star & Strauss, 1999). In the context of digital work, this means that clients and freelancers might have very different connotations of what "work" entails.

One example which exemplifies this idea of relativity is Strauss' 1982 medical case study which looked at the work processes patients with chronic illnesses must perform — some of which is necessary, expected, and/or supplementary to their caregivers' own work. Strauss' study of hospitalized patients and their invisible work demonstrates the interaction and cooperation actors must have together, despite some work being seen as expected or invisible by the other party (Strauss, 1982). This characteristic of visibility and invisibility is extremely important to understand because it reminds us that instead of work being limited to a certain population, invisible work reaches everyone, albeit in varying degrees. It likewise entails that there is a physical and/or mental labor demand actors have and must perform without being directly acknowledged for it.

A fourth finding from Strauss' research is the idea that work is constantly moving, meaning that unplanned events should be accounted for and expected from the beginning of the work process (Strauss, 1988). In a 2018 article published in the *Business &*

Information Systems Engineering Journal about the future of work, researchers strengthen this argument by declaring that future systems must be designed for "usable, useful, and malleable digital solutions that can be adopted easily and flexibility, according to [a worker's] specific needs" (Richter et al., 2018; Richter & Riemer, 2013). By articulating these anticipated contingencies, along with the visibility of work, Strauss incidentally advances the argument that work should be dynamically studied through a variety of lenses and perspectives in order to paint a more holistic understanding (Orlikowski, 2016). Ultimately, digital knowledge workers are characterized by flexibility, autonomy, and a dependency for online platforms which serve as a mediator.

2.1.3. Digital Labor Platforms

Best-selling authors Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson mention in their novel *Machine | Platform | Crowds: Harnessing Our Digital Future* that we are at a point in time where "technologies are demonstrating that they can do work that we've never thought of as preprogrammed or 'routine'" (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2018). Online tools and services are rapidly changing both the economy (e.g. a digitally-enabled gig economy) and entire industry infrastructures (e.g. electronic health records in healthcare, distance/e-learning in education), and can be partly credited due to widespread standardization and pushes for technological intertwinement within quotidian life. In fact, according to the Internet World Stats, over half of the world's population (51.7%) became Internet users as of June 2017, and accessibility is only continuing to increase ("Internet World Stats," 2019).

Uncoincidentally, there is an increasing trend in research showing how online platforms are being used in the context of gig and contingency work (Barley et al., 2017). These specific online platforms — referred to as digital labor platforms — mediate the relationship between employers and workers and are estimated to have an annual growth rate of 26% (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2016). Ellie Harmon and Michael Silberman express that these "digital labor platforms appear to be a permanent fixture of a 'new world of work' that is flexible, digital, and globally networked" (Harmon & Silberman, 2018). Harmon and Silberman furthermore contribute a categorization system of three significant types of digital labor platforms: microtask platforms for lower-level skill jobs (e.g. data entry), freelance platforms which "distribute larger tasks or projects" (e.g. Upwork), and platforms which facilitate in-person work (e.g. Uber and Lyft for transportation).

The International Labour Organization adapts a similar categorization system, grouping commercial digital labor platforms into two distinct groups — web-based and location-based — which are further divided by the worker audience (i.e. tasks given to selected individuals versus tasks given to the crowd). In their system, there are eight unique types of commercial digital labor platforms: freelance marketplaces, microtasking crowdwork, contest-based creative crowdwork, accommodation, transportation, delivery, household services, and local microtasking. The ILO also outlined in the same report 18 proposed criteria to ensure decent work on digital labor platforms, which includes criteria such as workers having a right to decline tasks and workers being informed on why they receive unfavorable ratings (Berg et al., 2018).

In particular, the subcategory of online freelance platforms are of interest to us for this study as they facilitate knowledge work mentioned in the previous section and are typically understudied compared to other platforms such as Airbnb and Uber (Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2018). Categorized by Kalleberg & Dunn (2016) as having negotiable wages, and greater autonomy, these freelance labor platforms are greatly attractive for knowledge workers seeking a more flexible and independent lifestyle. View Figure 1 for an overview of Kalleberg & Dunn's categorization of digital labor platforms.

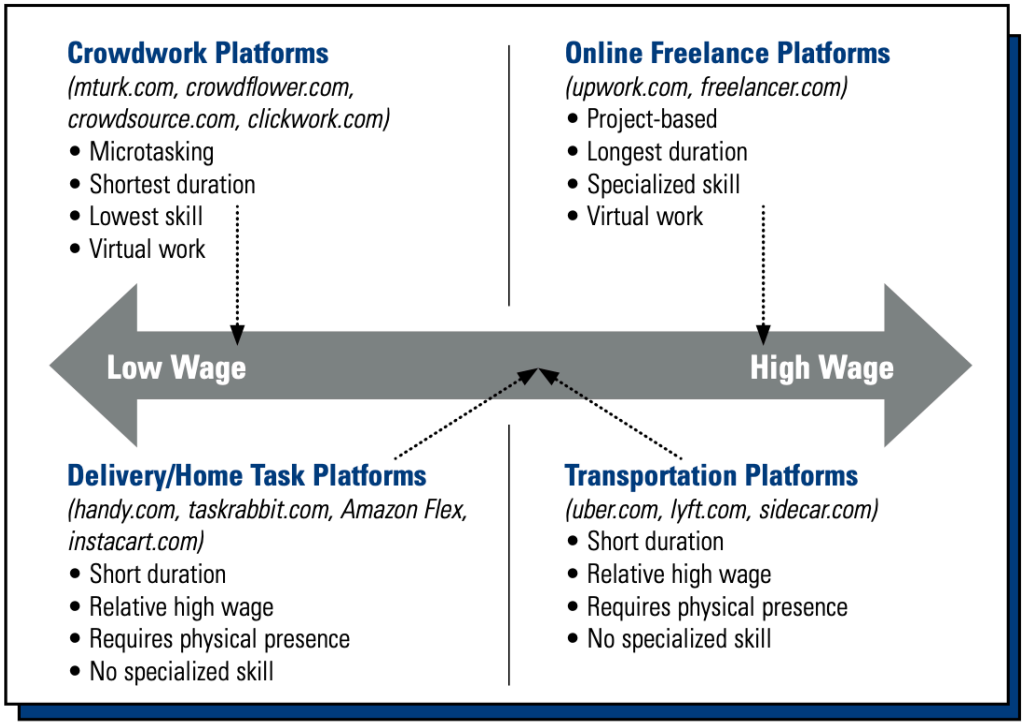

Figure 1: Wage Continuum of Online Platforms (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016)

Ultimately, all digital labor platforms help facilitate the connection between workers and clients by creating a new type of social interaction which occurs online. It should be noted that each platform holds specific affordances and constraints, such as varying algorithms and types of active platform users, which must be examined closely.

Gig workers are also "usually identified by the platform they're associated with" (e.g. we commonly refer to someone as an Uber driver as opposed to a rideshare driver), which again highlights the importance of the platform and its perceived brand and ecosystem in the sharing economy (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016; Kinder et al., 2019).

2.2. Self-Presentation

2.2.1. Self-Branding in the Work Environment

In the case of independent contractors and self-employed workers, the nature of self-branding is an extremely vital facet of their job as it becomes a primary way of finding and securing work (Gandini, 2015). Also known as personal branding, this action of adopting certain traditional marketing practices found traditionally in larger organizations has found its way into the lives of independent workers as a form of free and invisible labor (Gandini, 2016).

Self-branding in the context of the freelance economy also has two principal traits which should be highlighted; first, "professionally sociality, online or offline, is compulsory to get visibility and recognition" and "professional sociality is performative" as an "act of self-construction" (Gandini, 2016; Moriset, 2017). These two characteristics describe the necessity of self-branding as a digital worker since self-presentation is necessary to be noticeable on platforms. Some experts believe that self-branding differs slightly from managing one's self-reputation (although these are usually used interchangeably), primarily because there are specific steps and strategies people may take in the former (Gershon, 2017). Self-branding practices which help an individual's

reputation can be equated to the term “social capital” (taken from social theory), as it becomes a valuable intangible resource for independent workers (Gandini, 2016).

In a recent systematic review of personal branding of 100 articles, researchers found that there is “no commonly accepted academic definition” nor theoretical model which currently exists for personal branding, which presents a large obstacle for research in this field as the evidence for this is substantial (i.e. there is a large disconnect amongst the reviewed papers) (Gorbatov et al., 2018). This review mentioned many different theoretical frameworks in which self-branding is studied in — sociology (e.g. dramaturgical perspective, impression management), marketing (e.g. human branding, branding services), psychology (e.g. identity formation, self-development), and economic (e.g. macro-environment studies, reputation economy) — although the majority of papers analyzed referred specifically a sociological framework.

Regardless of the topic spanning a number of disciplines, the authors identified several attributes of personal branding and attempted to create their own definition of self-branding, which can help guide us moving forward: “Personal branding is a strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based in a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signal a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery” (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

Seeing that the primary goal of traditional branding is to stand out against competitors and be unique, it should be clear that these marketing strategies would soon be adapted on a small and individual level, especially amidst the rise of self-employed workers who are essentially their own CEO of sorts (Mitchell, 2012). Branding can best

be explained via Borman-Shoap et al.'s chart (Table 2), which indicates that a brand is determined externally (as opposed to mission, vision, and values which are all determined internally).

Mission	Vision	Values	Brand
Who we think we are	Who we want to become	What informs who we are	Who others perceive us to be
	Determined internally		*Determined externally*

Table 2: Mission, Vision, Values, and Brand (Borman-Shoap et al., 2019)

In Borman-Shoap et al.'s interactive self-branding workshop, the researchers phrased self-branding as answering the question "what does my work say about me?" which was later compared with their work and/or CV by a peer reviewer (hence the "determined externally" characteristic of branding). Examples of single-word brands (which was a large focus for this workshop) found in larger-scale, traditional organizations and institutions include Apple's creativity, Volvo's safety, and Ralph Lauren Polo's preppy (Borman-Shoap et al., 2019).

According to Joel R. Evans, distinguished business professor at Hofstra University, there are eight specific steps in the self-branding process (Evans, 2017). Evans states that the first steps of any self-branding strategy should begin with a critical self-assessment of oneself (analyzing both strengths and weaknesses, sometimes achieved in the form of a "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis" — or "SWOT analysis" for short). Second to a self-assessment, research on job and market trends — alongside research pertaining to a specific career path or industry — should follow suite, which in turn helps the worker determine their own career goals. Once a worker has a clear goal in mind, they can then turn to skill building to address their weaknesses and

improve on their strengths. Next steps include creating, maintaining, and communicating the brand, which is an iterative process, changing according to feedback and an individual's goal. Evan states that the last step of the self-branding process encompasses finding a job that fits the need and skill-level of the worker which can lead them to further enhance their own brand. In this way, we can see self-branding not only as externally motivated (e.g. getting hired), but also as internally motivated (e.g. professional development, self-fulfillment). Self-branding should be considered successful when "people are supposed to sense the words that underlie your personal brand without explicitly being told what these words are" (Gershon, 2017).

Current research in the field shows that self-branding is a familiar concept for most freelancers, although the reception toward it is mixed. In one study, researchers surveyed a total of 163 knowledge workers (101 freelance journalists in New York and Paris and 62 "white-collar" workers in Boston) and found that workers view self-branding as a "natural feature of any modern economy," insinuating that it is expected to have as an independent worker (Vallas & Christin, 2017).

Additionally, findings from this study show that while some independent workers embraced self-branding, others resented or rejected it, viewing it as inauthentic and performative. On the same note, the study showed that there are also some groups of populations who are more inclined to view self-branding in a positive light than others. For example, American workers were more accepting of the idea of self-branding than their European counterparts; likewise, workers whose professions were either freelancing or in information technology were more in favor of self-branding practices than people who were not (Vallas & Hill, 2018).

2.2.2. Digital Labor Platforms and Self-Branding

Personal branding in the work environment is not new per se, though online technology and big data are helping exemplify these practices on a larger scale. Digital labor platforms play a major role in self-branding practices for both workers and clients, since creating a cyberidentity (i.e. an online persona) is almost always a requirement necessary to make use of the website. For instance, the platform Uber is rendered essentially useless if there is no account/profile for either a rider or driver; in order for the work process to materialize, both parties must have an account. It is additionally not uncommon for workers to extend their online persona to multiple platforms, which is usually done in order to reach a wider network and acquire more job opportunities. For example, an Uber driver might also work for Lyft and vice versa; and, in the same light, clients might have both applications on their phone to compare prices on a given day. Another common feature for online platforms is having in-house communication tools and features. Some platforms, like Uber, also include off-platform communication features (e.g. an Uber driver can be provided a passenger's phone number and call them using their mobile phone if lost), whereas others demand that users perform all communication on the platform (e.g. an in-house instant messaging service), primarily for liability reasons.

For people looking for work on online freelancing platforms, having a good profile reputation is critical as they want to present their best selves to potential employers. Successful online freelancers who use online platforms to find and promote their work must also accept and embrace them, even if that means taking advantage of them by manipulating algorithms. For example, one recent study revealed that some

workers used and included frequent buzzwords in their profile simply to bump up their profile on LinkedIn (Gandini, 2016). This algorithmic phenomenon is at the heart of freelance labor platforms as it matches clients and workers entirely via platform-based rating and reputation systems (Wood et al., 2018). As platform companies are quickly embracing their importance in the work ecosystem, features like ratings and written testimonials are starting to appear as industry standards to confirm a worker's reputation in addition to features like a biography and skills section — all of which help paint a more holistic picture of a user's identity. Additionally, these "reputation-signaling mechanisms" further "maximize the likelihood of a successful transaction" which incentivizes platforms for providing such affordances (Abrate & Viglia, 2017).

Moreover, research shows that platforms matter when it comes to self-branding for an independent worker and can be seen as a "working tool" for digital workers (Gandini, 2016). Backing this up, researchers interviewed freelancers and found that the "platform-specific self-brand is based upon 'imagined affordances' of individual platforms and their placement within the larger social media ecology," which are influenced by platform features, audience assumptions, and worker's own self-concept (Duffy et al., 2017). This implies that workers consider the platform(s) they chose to self-brand on; for example, a musician might choose to self-brand on platforms that have specific multimedia features like YouTube, whereas a creative designer might choose a platform like Squarespace which can easily host an art portfolio.

To refer back to Evans' self-branding model, these online platforms help ease the creation, maintenance, and communication of brands on a large-scale network as they serve as a "middle-man" for facilitating work between a worker and client (Evans,

2019). As suspected, the ideal setting would be that both authenticity and transparency are prevalent in people's self-branding practices as well as the platform they choose to use. However, we see that this is far from the case as Erving Goffman's impression management theory (detailed in the following section) states that people will always seek to self-present themselves with some kind of interior motive and online labor platforms tend to hide their algorithms from the public. Because of this, investigating a platform's perceived agency is also of interest for future research as that digital work will only continue to grow. In Duffy et al.'s research, we are able to recognize that platforms are in fact not neutral as they each provide different affordances; therefore, to better understand how technology is disrupting what "work" connotes, it is worth gathering a holistic perspective encompassing all perspectives of information technology, work, and actors.

Currently, most research on personal branding in the work environment investigates either social media or online gig platforms like ride-sharing (e.g. Lyft) and microtasking (e.g. Amazon Mechanical Turk); however, past studies suggest that there still remains a gap regarding online freelancing platforms which help facilitate knowledge work. Other studies also fail to show both perspectives of the working employer-employee relationship, as previous literature tends to focus solely on the freelancer while dismissing the employer's point of view.

3. Theoretical Framework: Goffman's Dramaturgy and Impression Management

The idea of self-branding can trace back to the field of sociology through the theoretical framework of dramaturgical analysis and impression management, first conceptualized by pioneer Erving Goffman in 1958 whose contributions to sociology cannot be understated. In a *Times Higher Education* article published in 2007, Goffman was the sixth most cited book author in the humanities and social sciences and in 1998, his grossly influential book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, was named as the 10th most important sociology book of the twentieth century by the International Sociological Association in 1998 (ISA Congress Programme Committee, 1998; McKie et al., 2015). Accolades such as these put Goffman in the same category as Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, other leaders in the field. In support of this, a systematic review of personal branding also shows that Goffman's dramaturgical analysis perspective was the most-referenced theoretical framework (used 19 times out of the 100 analyzed papers) to explain self-branding (Gorbatov et al., 2018).

In summary, Goffman's dramaturgical analysis perspective refers to an individual's self-presentation — or "behavior that attempts to convey some information about oneself or some image of oneself to other people" — by using theater as a metaphor for life (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987). Goffman attentively explored different features which make up a person's "front stage" performance, contending that every performance consists of three traditional features: setting, appearance, and manner — all

of which can be analyzed both literally in a theater and metaphorically in a self-branding context. In this case, setting describes a person's physical environment location where an interaction may take place; moreover, as different settings may have different types of audiences, the interactions the actor has also change, depending on the audience. The second attribute, appearance, typically refers to the clothes an actor is wearing, which can portray their social status, work occupation, and age. Lastly, manner alludes to the types of behaviors an actor presents (Goffman, 1958). It is during this front stage performance that "performers typically conceal behaviors, attitudes, and emotions that can be expressed in the backstage," which is the second structural feature of dramaturgy characterized by being away from the audience (Houts, 2004).

This idea of presenting oneself outwardly toward others stem from two primary causes. The first cause for self-presentation is "audience pleasing," which occurs as peoples' fronts tend to be selected rather than suddenly created, because when "an actor takes on an established social role, usually [they find] that a particular front has already been established for it" due to social interactions with and toward a certain audience (Goffman, 1958). Besides enabling social interaction and communication, a second external factor for putting on a front (this time typically in a positive manner) is that the actor can expect to gain some type of reward — both material and/or social — by doing so (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987; Brown 2015).

Based on previous literature, researchers have attempted to categorize and define trends in self-presentation while also recognizing that everyone may act differently even in the same circumstance. Research shows that successful self-presentation is composed of three intertwining parts, which are: having a motivation for impressing others, an

awareness and knowledge of what traits should be presented, and an ability to present themselves (Brown, 2015). In another study (Jones & Pittman, 1982), common self-presentation strategies were divided into five unique categories, along with a respective impression and risk. The five self-presentation strategies they found were: ingratiation, self-promotion, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication. To view the Jones & Pittman's full table, refer to the Appendix. These frameworks for self-presentation were referred to in-depth during the data analysis for this study and provide powerful foundations for future research — especially as we spearhead our way into the realm of digital work.

Even so, one large limitation with Goffman's dramaturgical perspective is that it does not explicitly deal with digital contexts, although some people argue that it can be extended to electronic communication as well (Miller, 1990). To combat this, his framework was later expanded by Joshua Meyrowitz in 1990 to account for these changes by looking at the evolving media and how they might affect our interactions with the world (Meyrowitz, 1990) and then again by evolving into impression management theory, defined as "any behavior by a person that has the purpose of controlling or manipulating the attributions and impressions formed of that person by others" (Tedeschi, 1984). Amongst the rise of social media platforms, there has been active discussion in how people choose to present themselves via computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the social implications of doing so compared to self-presenting in a physical, face-to-face setting. One result of self-presenting using CMC is that people thus have "cyberidentities," or online presentations of themselves, and that these cyberidentities may or may not be different than a person's real identity. When replacing face-to-face

communication with CMC, aspects of traditional impression management such as physical body language and behavior are remediated through other types of media, such as photos, videos, text, and any other types of multimedia afforded by the technology at hand.

According to Goran Bubaš, impression management on the Internet and via CMC is "simplified in situations when someone is (a) trying to transmit *socially favorable* [information] while omitting socially disadvantageous personal data; or (b) or engaging in *social deception* by conveying socially agreeable but untrue or incorrect personal information" — in other words, impression management encompasses adding, removing, and/or altering specific information about oneself for favorable gain (Bubaš, 2001). Other studies have been carried out in specific areas of impression management. For example, one researcher looked at the popular Estonian social networking site *rate.ee* and found that visual impression management (e.g. profile pictures) varies depending on the audience and that "profile images . . . are constructed and reconstructed based on the values associated with 'the ideal self'" (Siibak, 2009).

To conclude this section, this master's paper expands on concepts from Goffman's self-presentation theories of impression management and dramaturgical analysis by applying them to the digital work environment and to the different types of personal branding strategies digital workers use. By applying a sociological framework, we can grasp a better understanding of digital workers and their interactions, influences, and activities in our world.

4. Method

4.1. Upwork

Online freelancing was chosen as a focus for this study compared to other types of gig work (e.g. rideshare, microtasking, delivery), as it has been "typically understudied in the past" (Sutherland et al., 2019). The digital labor platform Upwork was chosen for this study as it is considered a leader in the online freelancing world and is known for promoting and facilitating knowledge work via computer-mediated communication amongst a large network. Also, as all users on the website are either associated as a freelancer or client account, it helps give us a literacy around digital freelance work (in comparison to other professional platforms like LinkedIn, which is not limited to freelancing). Furthermore, Upwork was selected as it is not tied down to one single domain or skill, and therefore is able to span across many industries.

The website divides knowledge work into eight broad categories (Web Development, Mobile Development, Design, Writing, Administrative Support, Customer Service, Marketing, Accounting) and has two distinct user groups as its main audience (freelancers and clients). As a facilitator and mediator, the platform also incorporates several distinct features as it "embraces the value of reputation and trust as currency," which include: time and project management tracking tools, job success scores, user ratings, and reviews (Popiel, 2017).

4.2. Participants

Participants in this study included 39 users who had an account on Upwork, including 20 freelancers and 19 clients (n = 39) between the ages of 20 to 59. In this paper, the 20 freelancers are identified as F1-F20 and the 19 clients are identified as C1-C19. Participants were recruited through social networking sites (i.e. Twitter, Reddit, Quora), personal and professional websites, and Upwork. It was not uncommon to see a client who also had a freelancing account (13 of the 19 clients had also used the platform as a worker); however, for the purposes of the study we categorized them into two separate user groups (freelancers and clients) which were based on the participant's primary actions and activities associated with the platform. While there may be a nuanced distinction since some users have multiple accounts, the analysis takes this approach of dividing them out since the client perspective of the platform differs than that of a freelancer's.

Regarding employment type, 22 out of the 39 participants interviewed in this study identified as a full-time freelancer, 7 as a business owner, 7 as both a business owner and freelancer, and 3 as hired by larger organizations. Likewise, their experience with Upwork was skewed given that 31 participants were long-time users of the platform and only 8 were new. And, when asked about their reliance on Upwork, 28 participants said that they mostly get hired/hire through the platform, 9 responded that they rely on the platform "some," and 2 replied that they rely little on Upwork. Industry and professions ranged greatly and included fields such as creative writing, marketing, web design, user experience design, information technology, 3D art, voice acting, industrial design, ghost blogging, photography, and copywriting.

4.3. Design

The methodology for this master's thesis drew heavily from Wanda Orlikowski's research agenda for studying digital work, which included shifting the research focus away from work as a series of tasks and products found in previous literature to instead viewing work as "dynamic and situated activities that constitute working" and away from human-centered studies toward focusing on the material enactments of work (Orlikowski 2016; Weick 1969).

This research study sought to investigate the many different thoughts, behaviors, and activities digital workers showed with a special emphasis on the actions and strategies they took. A formal, semi-structured interview protocol was chosen for this study as questions specific to personal branding were selected ahead of time. Predefined questions asked during the interviews include: what led them to freelancing, their perceptions of the platform's algorithm and reputation system, how they find gigs/projects, etc. By using a semi-structured interview method, participants were also allowed to express their views and opinions in their own terms.

4.4. Procedure

After being recruited, participants scheduled a meeting time for an interview. On average, interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were all conducted remotely using Skype or telephone using semi-structured methodology. Interviews were then recorded, transcribed, and stored in a secure Dropbox folder accessible only to the researchers working on this project. The data and information from these transcriptions

were the primary data source for the analysis of this project. Through an axial coding process, first and second order concepts were derived from the transcription

5. Findings

By analyzing the interview transcripts from 18 clients and 20 freelancers on the platform Upwork, we have identified several emerging trends and patterns of personal branding within the context of digital work. Specifically, we had two significant findings from this study. First, we observed discourse revolving around Upwork's rating and reputation system and how it affects individuals looking for work. Secondly, we found that freelancers on the platform engaged in particular self-branding strategies in order to be recognized by clients.

5.1. Platform-Afforded Reputation

Almost every participant mentioned the website's five-star rating system (the average of client ratings) and job success score system (a calculation by Upwork), suggesting that platform-afforded reputation was extremely important to them. Along these same lines, participants also mentioned how their reputation acted as a motivator for their work. For example, when talking about the nature of the gig economy and what it was like being a digital worker, F20 organically brought up how building a reputation can make the job more enjoyable:

> To me, [the gig economy]'s exciting. I mean, the fact that I'm interacting with people all over the world — and you know, if you build a reputation in a certain area, it's great. I'm dealing with people and different challenges every week . . . You never know where things are going to come from.

F5 echoed this sentiment of being motivated for keeping a good reputation on the platform (which was also unprompted by the interviewers), except this time from a perspective induced more by precautionary anxiety rather than excitement:

> The other thing is I have to worry about my reputation on Upwork. So, I'm somewhat motivated to make sure that I find a solution that both of us agree to because I don't want the bad rating.

Their comment about not wanting a "bad" rating was common amongst other freelancers since current and prospective clients form initial impressions from these ratings and reviews. One client, C13, highlighted the importance of these reputation metrics which are afforded by Upwork, and said that a user's job success score "is the first thing [they] look at" when on a profile determining whether or not to hire them.

This complex power dynamic between the client and freelancer was a common topic of discussion in the interviews, since a big portion of the freelancer's reputation lies entirely in the hands of the client. F3 reinforced this idea that work is usually initiated by the client rather than the freelancer, stating "probably two-thirds of the work that I get from the platform is work where the client contacted me" and not the other way around. In addition, we saw that participants somewhat agreed that Upwork tends to favor the client, who many viewed as being the ones "in control." We also noted that reputation tends to matter less to those hiring and more to those looking for work; a good example of this can be seen in the explanation C10 gave regarding ratings and impact — or lack-thereof — for clients:

> I never pay attention to [ratings] because I'm fair with people. It's more of a personal boost because they usually say good things about me, but I really don't care … In this type of economy, as long as you do a good job, you don't care about what the ratings are... (C10)

However, while these reputation metrics might be one of the first measures of judgment on a profile, responses varied when participants were asked whether they thought these ratings accurately reflected and conveyed the quality of work freelancers delivered. For the most part, freelancers agreed that the rating system helped distinguish their profile amongst other workers who might have a lower rating or score than them, although they also agreed that the reviews tended to be inflated and were not always the most accurate, nor the most informative. For example, F3 perceived that "great reviews … don't really have much substance to them."

While some participants were satisfied with Upwork's reputation system, the most common patterns regarding quantitative measures of reputation were criticisms centered around rating inflation, client subjectivity, and lack of transparency. We found subjective variability in client feedback, ranging from inflated to overly-critical reviews. Consequently, just one "bad" rating on a freelancer's profile could grossly influence whether or not they are chosen for a job. In the words of F18, "You need to get five-star ratings or it doesn't count; it's as simple as that." F13 also detailed their expectations about the inflated ratings:

> The clients always pick five star [*sic*] . . . I don't know if all rating systems online are like this, but they just seem to be weighted like super high. If I didn't do a great job, they give me a four star [*sic*], so I'm like what do I have to do to get a one star? Probably not show up . . . If you meet minimum expectations, you're going to get a five star [*sic*] from most clients I think, and then if there were some problems, you get four.

The Upwork-specific reputation scores were not perceived as being transparent by freelancers since they did not always understand why their ratings went down. F3 told us a first-hand account of this, explaining that the client left a bad review "only Upwork

could see" which affected their job success score significantly (they later mentioned they could see their rating — which was a mere 2.7 stars — after the platform's two-week window policy). The limitations of these ratings and reviews mentioned in this section point to the importance of specific self-branding strategies workers can utilize in order to be recognized and picked up on the platform.

5.2. Key Self-Branding Strategies

More specifically, while participants felt that clients held more power in the client-freelancer relationship, there were several recurring self-presentational strategies which were found in the data that suggest how digital workers chose to self-brand themselves. In the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked how they found freelancing work. In most cases, they described various practices and behaviors used which involved both the platform and client. In conjunction with the findings mentioned in the previous section, we were able to categorize these personal branding strategies into the following five categories:

1. boosting a profile via algorithmic manipulation,
2. showcasing hard and soft skills both implicitly and explicitly,
3. expanding presence,
4. pursuing relationships with clients outside the platform,
5. and individualizing brand.

To describe and present these categories in greater detail, we adopted key elements of self-presentational strategies articulated by Jones & Pittman (1982) in their book chapter, *Toward a General Theory of Strategic Self-Presentation*. We created these

elements based off of Goffman's' impression management model as they argued that strategic self-presentation "is to arouse particular impression-management motives" (see Appendix for Jones & Pittman's original table) (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Table 3 outlines the five self-branding strategies we observed, along with a proposed taxonomy of self-branding strategies for digital workers.

Self-Branding Strategy	**Impression(s) Sought**	**Prototypic Actions and Behaviors**	**Self-Branding Risk(s)**
Boosting a profile via algorithmic manipulation	Credible, trustworthy	Learning, understanding, and utilizing platform features to their advantage	Fraudulent
Showcasing hard and soft skills	Competent, skilled	Explicitly listing out top skills while implicitly incorporating multimedia to tell a story	Self-centered, boastful
Expanding presence	Active, engaged	Creating accounts on different online platforms, attending professional development and networking events, join online communities	Desperate
Maintaining relationships with clients	Friendly, likable	Use off-platform tools for communication, initiate conversation	Irritating
Individualizing brand	Unique, motivated	Look up the client beforehand, create personalized work for the client, customize language toward audience	Creepy, Obsequious

Table 3: Dominant Forms of Self-Presentation Strategies for Digital Workers (adopted from Jones & Pittman, 1982)

5.2.1 Boosting a Profile via Algorithmic Manipulation

One of the most common strategies mentioned was one that involved building and growing a positive reputation on the platform via working with and around algorithmic management of the rating systems. Most freelancers responded that when first starting out, they performed various work-arounds to quickly boost their profile visibility on the website (i.e. in the recommended workers list that clients see). Prototypic actions of this strategy include learning and understanding the platform, its algorithm, and features for maximized profile visibility.

The impressions sought from working around the system included wanting to seem credible and trustworthy to potential clients, traits clients expressed wanting to have in a worker. However, if this strategy is pursued too vigorously, the freelancer could potentially risk seeming like a fraudulent account, a scammer, and/or an Internet bot if the client does not necessarily believe these reviews to be true. For example, one client (C2) questioned whether they are "actually communicating with the person who's doing the work," because they sometimes "get the feeling [they're] communicating through an intermediary." And while we found that freelancers were fairly curious about the feedback they received from their clients, there was consensus that they were more concerned with getting top scores in order to maintain a competitive advantage, rather than truly wanting constructive feedback.

One of the most common workarounds was finding and taking up jobs they felt confident in — usually for cheap. In this same instance, we also observed a shift in the power dynamic, given that this strategy required freelancers to initiate contact with the

client in search for smaller jobs. F15 gives an example of how they secured their first job — and first five-star rating — in a way that was mutually beneficial to themselves, as well as their client:

> ...A lot of people feel that they charge a really low rate to get started, but what I did was I went and set my rate higher, and then I went and I specifically looked for people who were new on the platform too who needed something short — something quick that I could hammer out in a day. So, my first job was I [*sic*] wound up rewriting somebody's about me page for the company that they were starting. I did it in one afternoon. I think I got paid like $25 or something ridiculously low, but it got me my first completed job and first five-star review.

F5 reiterated a similar idea of taking on projects that are short-term, cheap, and small in order to build a positive reputation on the site. F5 also noted that it became easier to find jobs after the first initial ones were completed (a process which again required more effort on the freelancer side):

> Go in cheap, start off cheap, start getting small projects. Do the little one- and two-hour ones, get them knocked out — especially if you can get them done pretty quickly . . . Get it turned around in less than three days and those usually will be something that gets you at least a good rating. As long as you have a rating and you're starting to get some of those, and you get more, and they're not bad, it's easier to start getting things a little bit bigger, a little bit bigger, a little bit bigger and at that point you can turn around and start raising your rate.

Conversely, platform work-arounds like lowering rates also reflected a larger problem within the freelance economy. F1 believed that "not charging enough for [a freelancer's] service . . . devalues the rest of us and it devalues art and design . . . I see it all the time and it breaks my heart."

On another note, Upwork's ranking algorithm for suggesting the relevancy of freelancers given a specific query is more complicated than simply going by one's job success score and rating. When asked about their knowledge on what brings a profile up to the top (i.e. Upwork's ranking algorithm), many freelancers stated that they did not

know. Their unfamiliarity could potentially explain why we saw such a large focus on the visible metrics since those were more apparent to a user. And because of this lack of transparency, many freelancers had negative reactions to the algorithm (e.g. F1 used adjectives like “horrible” and “terrible” to describe it). All the while, F7 mentions that the rating as being an important aspect of their Upwork profile, suggesting that their 100% job success score and top-rated status helped their profile “get bumped up to the top” when applying for projects.

Lastly, one significant finding regarding freelancers wanting to algorithmically boost their profile to the top included a strategy of personally reaching out to clients after completing a job. In many cases, Upwork freelancers mentioned that they would periodically remind clients who they felt they had a positive experience with to leave them a review, yet they would forego this action if they had a negative experience with them. Some freelancers even decided that if they were in a situation where they feared a client would leave them a bad review, they would turn to tactics like negotiation (e.g. F6 said “instead of trying to fight with [the client], I just said ‘Fine, I’ll refund your money’ because I don’t want to risk getting negative feedback on my profile).

5.2.2 Showcasing Skills

A second emerging theme throughout the interviews was an emphasis on showcasing hard and soft skills to clients — both implicitly and explicitly. Second to Upwork’s rating and job success score, skills seemed to be the primary way clients searched for freelancers on the platform. Many clients, like C2, said that they would start by looking for “specific skills” when starting to browse for people, which usually

occurred by using keywords or Upwork's filtering tool. Prototypic behaviors freelancer's took for showcasing their skills included listing their self-perceived top technical skills (e.g. programming, design) on their profile while also incorporating multimedia (mostly, but not limited to text) to showcase their soft skills (e.g. communication, work ethic). In both cases, this was observed both implicitly and explicitly as the workers attempted to give off an impression of being competent and skilled in specific areas. One caution with this self-presentation strategy, however, is that too much showcasing could potentially be perceived by clients as boastful and self-centered (i.e. being a "show-off") and therefore could minimize gig opportunities.

We found that most of the freelancers we interviewed had personal portfolios of their work they created to explicitly showcase their technical skills (this was more common in creative fields like design and art). For example, one freelancer (F15) who takes on diverse gigs (including copywriting, branding, event planning, and graphic design) told us how they strategically showcase writing on their portfolio; in this case, instead of simply showing examples of work, they showed the impact they had on previous clients. F15's portfolio strategy acts much like a traditional CV where workers are encouraged to quantitatively highlight their strengths; although F15 utilizes digital tools (i.e. screenshots) to showcase their influence.

> I didn't want to in my portfolio put in a bunch of 1,200-word articles that people had to read to figure out if I'm a good writer, because no one is going to do that. So instead, I went into the backend of WordPress on this guy's blog and I took a screenshot of his traffic over the course of the year and I highlighted the month where I started writing for him where his traffic doubled — and it continued to stay higher for the next six months. I just [screenshotted] that and threw it in my portfolio and added a description, and now within two seconds someone can see that my writing is effective.

F10, a voice artist, also explained how they showcase their multimedia skills on their personal website:

> I have a website … It features several videos I've done. It also features a couple links to different sound cloud files that I've worked on. I also if I happen to content them via e-mail I'll just send them an MP3 of my demo.

One client, C8, noted that when hiring, past background experience did not necessarily help a candidate stand out when there are many others who also possess a relevant background. And that instead, portfolios which showed technical skills in practice were ways people could highlight their strengths. Calling this idea "marketing 101," C8 explained how understanding one's competitive advantages must be showcased:

> I could care less about what the educational background is . . . If I'm hiring a web designer I don't care, show me your websites you've done . . . Show me your logo's. I had somebody who had, no, not even a grade 12 education, somebody who had a degree from a university in web design and I liked the portfolio from the guy who didn't even finish high school; that's the guy I'm going with. So, the portfolio is critical and most people don't put any time in their portfolio. So, the writing has to be there in the portfolio.

In addition to personal portfolios, other ways freelancers showcased their hard skills included utilizing different Upwork features — such as the "skills" section which is dedicated to test results in different subject areas. There was evidence, however, that freelancers were somewhat skeptical of Upwork's skills list on a user's profile; in most cases, freelancers who decided to showcase skills did so primarily to have a complete profile. F18 said that they completed the sections when first joining Upwork as part of the profile-building process: "I started taking the Upwork tests, that was the first thing I did . . . to complete my profile as much as I can basically." F4 also suggested that filling out the skills section and completing quizzes/tests and certificates would be a good way to start building an online reputation when first starting out:

> They're good for people who might be new. I don't really take a lot of — I don't find those to be all that useful. If I was looking to hire somebody at this point, tests would not be the first thing I looked at. I would be more important with what the rating is and what projects that they've completed. But I've done the tests to try to maybe give me a little bit if somebody is looking at me maybe it's enough to make them go to me versus the other person.

In the job-searching and hiring process, soft skills were also mentioned as being extremely important. We found that many freelancers implicitly showcased their skills through using correct grammar, compelling storytelling, and showing skills rather than simply listing them out. One client, C8, mentioned how one freelancer's recurring grammatical error led them to believe that they were not detail-oriented, a soft-skill needed in many types of projects:

> I've got a young fellow who's doing some work for me right now, a guy I'm mentoring, and he's done this every time. He's got a one "I" — and his writing is really decent — but there's one "I" in his profile that's not capitalized and he made the same mistake when he did his proposal, and it's like in the first paragraph he sent. So, if I get to the first paragraph and I see an uncapitalized "I," I'm going to say your attention to detail is not there you're done.

A freelance writer, F8, also decided to showcase their technical skills by incorporating them directly into their profile. In their case, writing is also a technical skill, but can be considered a soft skill in other fields. The tactic they used was weaving in their writing skills in the autobiographical section of the profile, telling a compelling story that successfully captured the reader's attention. They noted that this story was done strategically for two reasons: wanting to stand out from the crowd and demonstrating that they are skilled in storytelling.

5.2.3 Expanding Presence

A third commonly sought impression we observed was that freelancers wanted to appear active and engaged for potential clients. To do this, typical behaviors we found included expanding their presence by using the following tactics: social networking, creating accounts on different online platforms, becoming engaged with communities of practice, and participating in professional development and experiences. By expanding their presence to both the online and offline world, freelancers explained that they were able to augment their reputation since they reached a wider audience. One risk associated with expanding presence, however, is that freelancers could potentially come off as invasive and even desperate if they are perceived to be overly engaged, which could turn some employers away from them.

A large portion of freelancers we interviewed described having accounts on other platforms. The most commonly used platforms outside of Upwork where participants had accounts on included freelancing-platforms (e.g. Fiverr, Guru, Thumbtack), social networking sites (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook), and industry-specific work sites (e.g. 99 Designs, Skyword, Blogmutt). While these participants had a wide range of online freelancing accounts, it seemed like the majority either ended up not using all the platforms they belonged to, forgetting all the accounts they created, or preferring one or two websites over others after trying them out. For instance, most freelancers who had experience with the freelancing platform Fiverr disclosed that they preferred using Upwork. For instance, F15 told us that Fiverr “didn’t seem as lucrative” and that they would “probably had to spend another year building up my stuff,” suggesting it took more time to build a reputation. F20 also preferred Upwork, and said that they are “still

struggling with Fiver" whereas they could "promote [themselves] more effectively" on Upwork.

Regarding social media, many people strategically uploaded posts to raise awareness of their availability, skills, and/or work status. For example, F8 stated how they use social media to their advantage:

> Sometimes I have my name on the work so sometimes I'll just Tweet it out and tag the company to show them I'm doing stuff to promote their stuff outside of our relationship. But for the most part I just use it for my own work outside of Upwork to tell people about my own freelancing work.

F11 also mentioned how following people on different social networking sites like Instagram and Twitter was beneficial in terms of expanding presence and finding potential freelancing projects:

> A lot of [people I follow] are freelance writers — some of them are just people who blog or do other types of artistic digital platforms — and so we're all kind of connecting on social media. Then my own group of people that I know I'll probably just call them or text them about it.

Freelancers also sought to join online communities of practice, usually found on Facebook and the Upwork community forum, to get support and advice from other workers. A good number of freelancers were members of online forums and other freelancer groups on Facebook, which helped them ask questions, connect, and find and secure jobs. While some of these online discussions were public-facing, workers also had the assumption that they were mainly talking first-hand with other freelancers and thus were able to share personal and honest stories.

Likewise, online communities of practice weren't limited to the Internet; networking events were also extremely common. For example, a freelance photographer

(F12) explained why networking with others in their field helped establish community in a job which can tend to feel professionally isolating:

> It's nice to have colleagues so you don't feel isolated if you're just working from home all the time, or just talking to people digitally. But yeah, I do try to network with if there's an opportunity in the photojournalism world. I had two pretty big networking opportunities: last year I attended a workshop with a lot of the photojournalism world, and I went for a portfolio review at the New York Times and it was a pretty big networking event as well.

Networking events and conferences weren't only limited to freelancers, too. C2 said that "professional organizations" are where they find and hire freelancers when not on Upwork, and F10 also said that they secured several audiobook clients "through writer's conferences." Along the same lines, one goal for expanding presence is to get jobs through word-of-mouth, which is how F1 found most of their freelancing gigs through referrals:

> Let's see mostly word of mouth at this point. I've been very lucky that the first three or four clients I had were big loud mouth product developers so they first of all, it's amazing what a small world product development is, everybody knows each other. So, if you meet one guy with a big mouth, he'll tell all his friends about you and then they tell their friends and that's more clients.

5.2.4 Maintaining Relationships with Clients

A fourth strategy observed in this study was that many freelancers chose to pursue relationships with clients even after the official work and transaction process had been completed on the platform. This self-branding strategy was used with the goal of instilling a likable and personable impression on clients, with the hope that the client likes them enough to hire them back. However, one risk associated with pursuing relationships off Upwork is that the relationship can be one-sided and not mutually-appreciative. If the client does not seem engaged or interested in maintaining a

relationship, but the freelancer continues to pursue them, then the client could have negative impressions of them, believing the freelancer to be clingy, annoying, or needy. Therefore, to mitigate this risk, maintaining relationships necessitates a mixture of good social awareness, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills by the freelancer to assess the relationship and situation.

In our findings, we observed many freelancers who discussed wanting to maintain relationships with clients with the hopes of gaining repeat work. For instance, F10 explained their decision and thought process behind maintaining relationships with clients. Furthermore, they described how they were able to get repeat work by using this strategy, even if it potentially hurt their job success score:

> I try to maintain a working relationship with my clients. Very rarely will I just get the job, do the job, and here you go. Usually, I try to engage them in a little conversation and try to build a rapport and a little longer lasting relationship. I don't know if that really helps my job success score stay the same, but it does get me repeat business.

This strategy requires significant effort on the worker, especially in the context of the gig economy, as it seeks for stability in an economy characterized by precarity. But, while the notion of working with the same people might seem contrary to what digital workers are looking for, F20 commented that "repeat clients makes this all work well." In a sense, having a regular customer base was welcomed, when also paired with a balance of autonomy and flexibility. F15 further explained in their interview why freelancers should consider aiming for repeat work rather than always searching for a new project or waiting for a prospective client to message them. Their account implied there is a mutually beneficial reason for maintaining long-standing relationships with clients:

> …Maybe just working with a smaller pool of ongoing clients, is maybe something I would start recommending to people. If you can — rather than looking for the next gig — really try to follow up with previous clients and see if they can give you more work because you're both going to get better results out of that.

One extremely common strategy for pursuing these relationships with clients included going away from the platform toward other communication channels, such as Skype and email. Both freelancers and clients pointed out that this went strictly against Upwork's terms of agreement; however, most people commented that Upwork could read all the messages in the in-house communication tool and were somewhat concerned with their privacy implications. And, while we did see a noticeable number of participants who preferred to use Upwork's communication system as opposed to off-platform tools, this was usually chosen when the client and freelancer had no previous relationship with each other and was usually intentionally chosen as a precautionary means (in case there were problems with the work and/or transaction).

Once both parties had an established relationship built around trust and credibility, it was common to see communication move away from the platform. Clients were generally accepting of moving off of the platform. For example, C11 mentions that they save a freelancer's contact information in their Skype and "hit them up in Skype any time I needed either design work," showing the mutual benefits of maintaining relationships. Another client, C12, said that they would use whatever technology the freelancer chose for long-term relationships, noting that a large factor of this is a convenience for re-hiring the same person:

> Because for example, sometimes they're working with people around the globe, some people will use WeChat, some people will use WhatsApp, some people will use Skype and so you want to make, like I want to make it easy for them the way they communicate with most of their clients because I want them to be online on

> that platform and respond, so that's why. That's only with long term relationships. Once you develop that long-term relationship with somebody, then there's also expectations and so that other developer, at this point I'm not going to send him anything unless it's large, I want him to grow. So, I'd rather do small technical work through other people because I don't want this guy to be doing the lower rate just to get new business.

In addition to facing the precarity nature of gig work head on, maintaining relationships also challenges the traditional gig work of anonymity and privacy, which was brought up several times by participants F14 recounted how Upwork is able to provide some anonymity to both the client and freelancer and how if they are not selected, it usually is not personal:

> In some respect, [the hiring process is] a little bit anonymous . . . A lot of times, you don't hear anything back from them. They never say "we're going to hire you"; it's just you put it out there and you don't hear anything back which is not a big deal.

5.2.5 Individualizing Brand

One last pattern which appeared in the interviews was that freelancers chose to individually personalize and customize their brand toward a specific audience, whether it was an individual client or a particular industry. Digital workers who utilized this tactic wanted to appear unique and motivated toward hirers by taking initiative sending customized attachments (e.g. proposals, messages, cover letters, work samples) as well as looking up their clients beforehand. It should be warned that in extreme cases, if a freelancer appears to tailor their work too much to one person or if they learn details about a client that might otherwise be thought of as private, then they could potentially appear as creepy, obsequious (i.e. obedient to a degrading degree), and invasive, thus giving off the wrong impression.

Given that this strategy required significantly more work and effort on the worker's side than the client's, this strategy was found less than the others mentioned in this paper. However, we noted that the freelancers that did choose to individualize their brand did so strategically and intentionally. For instance, F9 mentioned their thought-process when personalizing work toward a specific client:

> I tried to woo those people who offer those jobs specifically by putting something in the portfolio . . . that specifically shows that I'm the one that is the right man they need — and actually go out of my way and do like a five-minute thing that would demonstrate that I can do it . . . Personalize it on some level. I do think that would be much better. It leaves a better impression and it makes you stick out more and you have to do that because there are lots of people that apply for those jobs.

F7 likened this strategy toward branding best practices, signaling that they would customize a proposal "just if you were applying for a normal job in a cover letter so it shows that you've actually read about the project." They also had to remember to keep their profile within the brand they wanted to convey for a specific audience; in their case, they decided to focus their entire profile around digital marketing since they were looking only for marketing projects.

We also saw that clients on the platform greatly appreciated these customized gestures and were perceptive when workers did not customize their work. To illustrate this, C3 mentioned reading "recycled cover letters" from "freelancers that don't know anything about your project specs," which was a huge turn-off for them. Another client, C12, discussed the same idea:

> "I interview a lot of people for these projects and I can tell who does what well and who's lying and who's just submitting a copy/paste proposal for all of the clients and when they do that you understand that they're lazy and they don't put in any effort."

Some clients go far even to discount anyone who does not specifically personalize their communication; C8 gave us a hiring strategy they use in order to filter out workers who aren't reading the project details:

> "I'll say so I know you've read this in its entirety please put the word winter at the top of your cover letter and then of course I can then dump the 50% of the people who did not catch and put the word winter at the top. I can dump them without even looking at their qualifications.

6. Discussion

6.1. Dramaturgical Analysis

Findings from this study correlated with Goffman's dramaturgical analysis approach of self-presentation, which is the idea that "people's day-to-day lives can be understood as resembling performers in action on a theater stage" (Lamb, n.d.). Goffman's primary concepts which we draw upon are his two dramaturgical structural functions: the "front stage" (i.e. self-presentation) and the "back stage" (i.e. interactions with other actors that not in front of an audience).

Using his taxonomy, we contribute to the field our own findings of self-branding within the context of digital work through a dramaturgical analysis perspective. First, we first classify our findings as they relate to Goffman's model; specifically, we expand on the following terms: front stage, back stage, setting, appearance, and manner (see Table 4). We then present a diagram adapted from Kernaghan & Elwood (2013) in Figure 2 which models the characteristics of self-branding as a performance, while highlighting the interactions between freelancer, client, and digital labor platform.

Goffman's Attributes	Goffman's Model	Digital Work Model	Strategies
Front Stage	An actor's performance on stage in front of an audience	A digital worker's self-presentation to current and prospective clients	Sending a CV, résumé, proposal, and cover letter to an employer
Setting	Any kind of environment, location, scene, and/or prop an actor interacts with on stage	The platforms digital workers use to communicate, work, and self-brand themselves with; can also extend offline	Using an off-platform setting for maintaining relationships, a platform setting for self-branding, and offline setting for networking
Appearance	Any clothes, jewelry, makeup, or any other visible props the actor has on to denote social identity	How a person's user profile page appears to clients	Boosting a profile by algorithmically manipulating search results; showcasing technical and soft skills on profile
Manner	Emotional demeanor of an actor's behavior	Behaviors and actions freelancers have with their clients ranging from passive mannerisms to more active mannerisms	Personalizing a brand toward a specific client or audience; maintaining long-term relationships with clients
Back Stage	How an actor acts when not in front of an audience, but in front of other actors; interactions are typically "off-the-record"	Digital workers come together in online and offline settings to discuss advice, struggles, and frustrations of freelancing with each other	Joining online communities of practice; participating in online forums and discussions; following peers on social media; attending professional development and networking opportunities

Table 4: The Self-Branding of Digital Worker's Through the Lens of Dramaturgical Analysis

6.1.1. Front Stage

The majority of self-branding strategies we noted in our findings occur in the front stage (i.e. in front of an audience) given that freelancers used different impression management techniques toward clients in various ways. Gig workers and freelancers as actors and clients as the audience in this theatrical relationship. During this front stage, freelancers put on their best presentation of themselves to current and prospective clients with the goal of successfully obtaining and completing a gig. Additionally, front stage behavior "typically follows a routinized and learned social script shaped by cultural norms," which we see in their interactions during both the self-branding and hiring process (Cole, 2019). Examples of learned personal branding behavior in the workplace include sending a cover letter when applying for a job or sending a follow-up thank you message after a job interview; within a digital work context, these behaviors are simply being reconfigured by technology.

6.1.2. Setting

Three distinct features help expand Goffman's idea of the front stage; more specifically, he explained that the front is composed of a setting, appearance, and behavior. Setting, in our case, alludes to the environment and props online freelancers use while self-branding themselves. Based on our findings, we conclude that the setting refers to the digital tools, technology, and platforms which are used for self-branding. In some instances, the setting can also extend to the offline world. This was especially customary in strategies where gig workers choose to attend in-person events and engage in face-to-face communication deliberately. Because of these emerging themes, we conclude that

the setting for self-branding for digital workers is not limited to a digital environment, nor a physical location. Goffman also concluded that performances, norms, and behaviors change according to not only the audience, but also to the setting, making it an extremely important feature of self-presentation. This presents an interesting relationship between the freelancer and their setting. At times, they must adapt their strategy depending on the technological affordances available (e.g. freelancers strategically work around the mandatory reputation score on Upwork), and at other times, they may intentionally choose their setting from the very beginning depending on the strategy (e.g. attending an online versus offline conference).

6.1.3. Appearance

Goffman's second attribute of the front stage, appearance, is described traditionally by what an actor is wearing (e.g. clothes, jewelry, props) on stage to denote their social identity; however, when applied to the online world, we see that appearance is manifested through a person's user profile page. The primary function of appearance is signifying attributes which have "socially ascribed meaning" (e.g. age, gender, job) to a person; again, these types of personal details can be shown on a freelancer's profile (Crossman, 2019).

In order to participate in digitally-enabled gig work (as either a worker or client), creating a profile is almost always mandatory so that the platform can facilitate communication between users. A profile page allows a user to express themselves through various means and can drastically differ depending on the type of industry and/or gig work. Common features on freelancing platforms include profile page, photo, a short

text biography, and skills. In our study, we found that there were several types of self-branding strategies digital workers took to alter their appearance for customers. For example, we noted that some people worked around platform affordances to maximize their chances of being bumped up by the algorithm. Strategies found in this study included filling out all sections on a profile, working around the platform to increase reputation scores, and showcasing skills.

6.1.4. Manner

The last component of the front stage is manner, or emotional demeanor an actor gives off, which "[functions] at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation" (Goffman, 1956). Usually, these are seen in non-verbal communication (i.e. body language, behaviors) between people. When applying this to the digital work context, we saw varying degrees of manner throughout our study, ranging from more passive mannerisms (e.g. waiting for a client to contact them before deciding to actively self-brand themselves to them) to more active behaviors (e.g. reaching out to many clients in order to pick up small gigs).

We also observed manner through the behaviors and actions freelancers had with other freelancers and clients (e.g. following each other on social media). Our findings show that self-branding strategies for altering one's manner include personalizing the brand toward a specific prospective client and maintaining relationships and communication with clients.

6.1.5. Back Stage

Lastly, the back stage directly opposes the characteristics of the front stage, and refers to how an actor acts when they are in front of other actors/performers instead of an audience. Typically, behavior that occurs in the back stage is usually more informal than the front stage as actors are allowed to express themselves in a more natural way which can be thought of as "off-the-record" (Seale, 1997). This back stage region is full of learning opportunities where freelancers become comfortable sharing open and honest stories with their other workers. We noted aspects of the back stage in digital workers when they came together both in online and offline settings to discuss advice, struggles, and frustrations that come with the job. The study shows us that back stage behaviors include joining online communities of practice and forum groups (e.g. Upwork help forums, Facebook private groups), following other colleagues on social media, and attending professional development opportunities and conferences.

Introducing a digital context into the back stage does come with several implications of needing to rethink the back stage characteristics, since Goffman declared that it should be expected that "the passage from the front region to the back region will be kept closed to members of the audience or that the entire back region will be kept hidden from them" (Goffman, 1956). With the Internet, having a division between the two stages is not so clear cut due to the lack of privacy on the Internet, which contradicts the rigid separation between the front and back stage in Goffman's analysis.

An example which shows these blurred lines includes a situation where a freelancer writes a comment in a private discussion thread which was later leaked somehow (e.g. leaked screenshots, a group moderator changing the privacy setting from

"hidden" to "public"). In this instance, the comment was only intended to be seen by other freelancers, but potentially could be seen by the target audience. Instances like these call into question how applicable Goffman's back stage concept relates to impression management in a digital age where privacy is not a given.

6.2. Self-Branding as a Performance

By using Goffman's model to categorize our findings, we are able to literally view self-branding as part of a performance, or "front," that freelancers put on for current and prospective clients (Figure 2). Figure 2 shows us how the freelancer, as a performer, has the autonomy to move between the front and back stage depending on their situation and needs. For instance, at times they may need to get support or advice from other freelancers in the back stage region before altering their performance. In this region, they may engage in certain types of behaviors with other freelancers, such as joining communities of practice, participating in online forums and discussions, following peers on social media, and attending professional development and networking opportunities.

When returning to the front stage, freelancers become aware that they are in front of an audience and seek to present themselves using various strategies (detailed above) to alter their setting, manner, and appearance using different impression management techniques. In both regions, digital labor platforms (e.g. Upwork, Fiverr) interact and influence the freelancer's behaviors as they provide different affordances and constraints. The client also has access to these platforms as well, which presents a significant difference from Goffman's original model: the once-physical barrier between the front and back stage is now permeable, allowing for more concern over privacy and

security regarding self-presentation practices. Throughout the performance, the client also demonstrates certain behaviors. Specifically, they make judgements about the freelancer based on their personal branding techniques, and must ultimately go through the decision-making process of whether or not they want to hire them. Figure 2 presents these relationships and characteristics of self-branding as a performance.

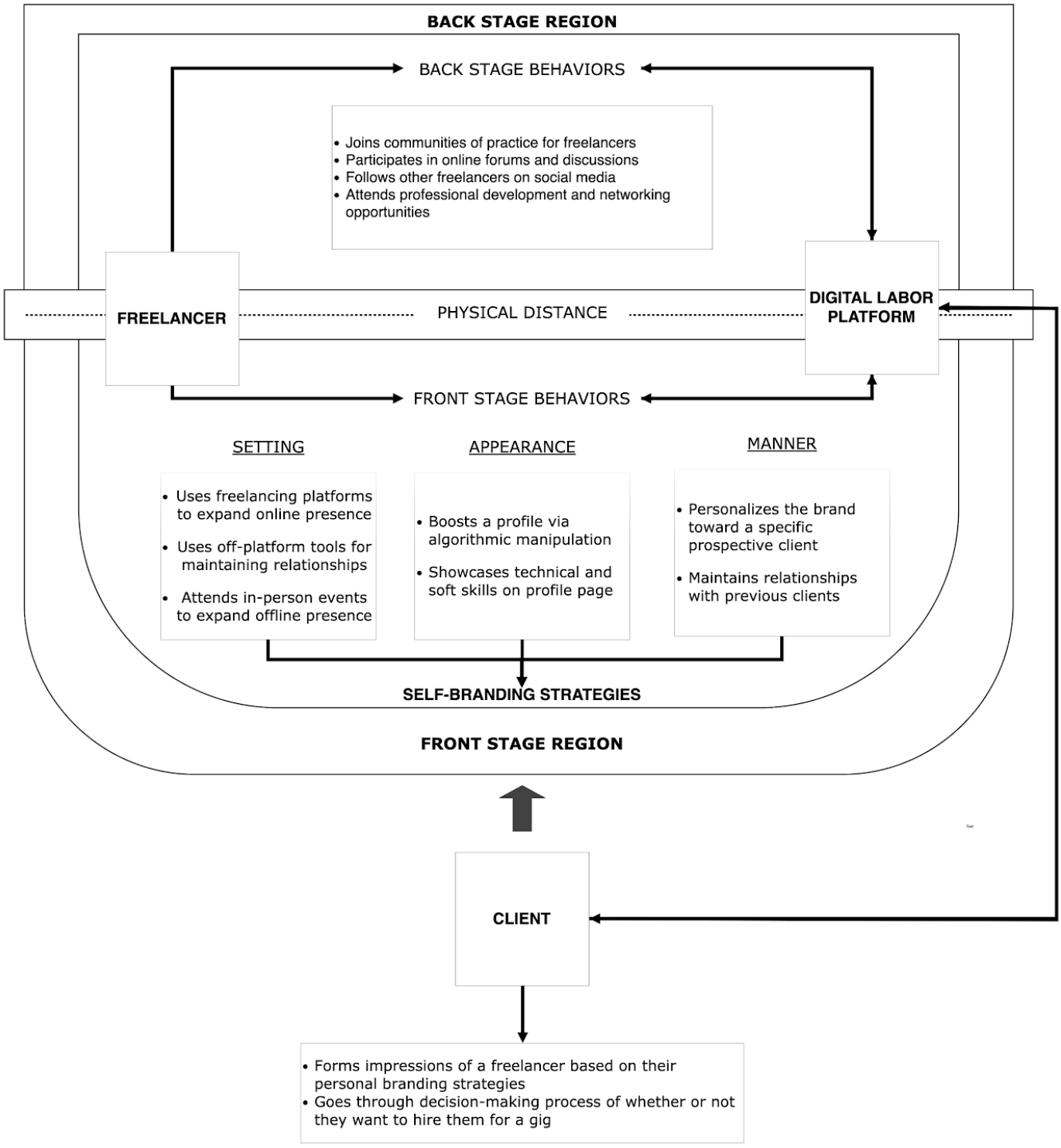

Figure 2: Characteristics of Self-Branding as a Performance

6.3. Implications

Overall, we found unanimous consensus that self-reputation plays an important factor in getting hired in the gig economy and that worker's mental models about reputation were directly influenced by their personal experiences of trial and error of different self-branding strategies, their social circle, and their industry. Our analysis reinforced Vallas & Christin's research (2017) that found that the majority of knowledge workers utilized a self-branding discourse, often bringing up a user's reputation with little-to-no prompting by the interviewers. This master's paper contributes to their findings as it studied a specific subset of knowledge workers — digital workers — on the platform Upwork. Attitudes and perceptions of self-presentation from this sample show that digital workers strategically chose to instill self-branding strategies into their work practices in order to advance their social reputation both for online and offline settings. The interviews suggest that self-branding acts as a form of invisible labor for freelancers, which clients expect and freelancers see as "an investment" for their career (F3).

In addition to identifying key strategies and practices, we also found that the types of technology and digital tools used by digital workers played a large role in self-branding. This aligns with previous literature which suggests that the digitally-enabled gig economy is composed not only of a worker and client, but also of a digital intermediary (Stanford, 2017). In our analysis, we found that a lot of workers preferred certain platforms over others, which depended on the different affordances and constraints they were able to give them. For instance, we found that participants used words like "professional" to describe Upwork, which we could perhaps even liken to their own brand. In this sense, we can argue that platforms, just like people, have

different brands and different audiences (e.g. industry-specific platforms). This points to the larger ecosystem of freelancing platforms and algorithmic phenomena at play (Kinder et al., 2019). Therefore, choosing a platform that matches the freelancer's goals is an important takeaway from this study.

We also noted that communication was taken off the platform, onto other communication means, for three primary reasons: increasing privacy, maintaining relationships, and gaining money (F1 mentioned that Upwork gets a 20% cut from each transaction). Implications of this show that platforms must look into what is working — and what is not — with their users, and how to increase user retention. As users were not dramatically impressed or affected by their job success scores or personal rating, it would also be interesting to note any other alternatives to showcasing reputation on a profile.

Lastly, literature points to independent workers having intense emotional responses toward the gig economy, such as anxiety due to job insecurity and excitement and fulfilment for having autonomy over gigs and work projects (Petriglieri et al., 2018). This leads us to believe that back stage opportunities where freelancers can connect openly and honestly with other freelancers play an important role in the well-being of independent workers, although as we noted earlier, the lack of privacy on the Internet disrupts this.

6.4. Limitations and Future Research

This study was not without its shortcomings and could be improved for future iterations. Popiel (2017) suggests the majority of Upwork freelancers resemble "low-

paying, less creative, and more menial than higher-paid positions" and it should be acknowledged that the interviewees for this study make up simply one faction of the entire Upwork community, and thus cannot be generalized across the entire platform, yet alone digital gig workers.

Secondly, according to Khedher (2013), personal branding involves brand character (i.e. identity), brand performance (i.e. self-presentation), and brand assessment (i.e. interpretation). Our study emphasized the latter two attributes of this dramaturgical framework of online personal branding, focusing on “brand performance” (i.e. freelancers’ self-presentational strategies) and “brand assessment” (i.e. clients’ interpretations). Khedler furthermore states “the starting point for a process of brand building is to first create a clear understanding of the internal brand identity,” something this study did not touch upon as much. Suggestions for future work include looking at the mental models digital workers have concerning their own internal brand identity.

Additionally, the study did not employ a triangulation methodology (also known as “convergent methodology”) to cross-validate the qualitative analysis. We recommend that future research uses quantitative metrics to assess personal branding strategies. Data source suggestions include web-scraped data from freelancing platforms and self-presentation survey metrics, such as the Self-Monitoring scale and the Impression Management scale (Berinsky, 2004).

7. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to understand self-branding practices in a digital work context while acknowledging technology's role in the client-freelancer relationship. In summary, the paper argues that digital workers — a new subset of knowledge workers dependent on digital tools and technology — utilize several distinct self-branding strategies in order to portray themselves in their best light to future, current, and past clients. These strategies have become an essential part of gig work due to its precarity and rising competition and by some measures have become a normalized industry standard. Likewise, failing to employ these self-branding strategies in a freelancing market can be detrimental to one's career as reputation is often a huge indicator of professional success.

By axial-coding 39 semi-structured interviews from digital workers on the freelancing platform Upwork, we identified five self-branding strategies using Goffman's self-presentation theories (impression management theory and dramaturgical analysis) as a theoretical perspective for this study. Describing the social interactions between freelancers and clients using Goffman's metaphors help illustrate a story composed of relationships, deception, power dynamics, and strategies — all characteristics which make us inherently human. Ultimately though, we chose to incorporate a sociological framework into our research plan as we believe that even in an information age, which can be engrossed in technology, human interaction is at the core of understanding society.

Appendix

Jones & Pittman's (1982) Self-Presentational Strategies

	attributions sought	negative attributions risked	emotion to be aroused	prototypical actions
1. Ingratiation	likable	sycophant, conformist,obsequious	affection	self-characterization, opinion conformity, other enhancement, favors
2. Intimidation	dangerous (ruthless, volatile)	blusterer, wishy washy, ineffectual	fear	threats, anger (incipient), breakdown (incipient)
3. Self-promotion	competent (effective, "a winner")	fraudulent, conceited, defensive	respect (awe, deference)	performance claims, performance accounts, performances
4. Exemplification	worthy (suffers, dedicated)	hypocrite, sanctimonious, exploitative	guilt (shame, emulation)	self-denial, helping, militancy for a cause
5. Supplication	helpless (handicapped, unfortunate)	stigmatized, lazy, demanding,	nurturance (obligation)	self-deprecation, entreaties for help

FIG. 9.1 A taxonomy of self-presentational strategies classified primarily by attribution sought.

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